

Of Fire Crosses and Wishing Stars

by Soul Hunter

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Summary: The story of a love lost, and later betrayed (REVISED -- smaller fonts. There ^_^)

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> <p>OF
FIRE CROSSES AND WISHING STARS

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She can't say which one is louder, the humming of the elevator or the pounding inside her chest. Of course she's nervous. She's not like the other two souls whose nerves are all steeled for this climactic event. Selphie doesn't seem fazed by the daunting prospect as she tensed her hands around the hard, solid twin rods of her Flail. She wanted this. She's been aching for this opportunity at retribution, so much that she had to ask Squall to take her with him when they finally face Sorceress Edea. And Squall himself? Aside from his usual battle-readiness, she knows he's likewise feeling a bit fidgety. Who wouldn't? How would it feel like to face in battle the woman who took care of them as kids?

She felt a chill envelope her body. She's really nervous. Though she used to be one of the front-runners in the defunct Forest Owls rebel group, Rinoa knows that she's never found herself in a situation like this before. So much is on the line, and the stakes on this one particular confrontation is so huge her head starts to feel light whenever she ponders at the possibilities.

But who's she trying to fool? Of course she's anxious about facing in

battle perhaps the world's most powerful sorceress. But that's not really it. Rinoa brings her hands together and subsequently felt the icy sensation suddenly gripping her moist palms. She's going to see him again. And much to her dismay, it had to happen under less than favorable circumstances.

His insolent smirk turns toward her while thrusting the pointed edge of his gunblade on the floor.

"Rinoa. You're going to fight me too? Remember a year ago we"

"Stop it!"

* * *

> <p>"Stop it, Seifer! Someone might see us."<p>

"Oh don't be such a killjoy, Rinoa. Everyone is out partying tonight. So what say we move a little bit over here and"

"No not here. Not now. We can meet somewhere else if you like. But you have to fulfill your promise first."

"Shit" Seifer exclaimed. "Okay, you win. Let's go see the headmaster."

The playful couple traversed the length of the hallway leading to the gala room, Rinoa all the while slapping Seifer's hands whenever they start their intrusive wanderings. As they turned one corner, Rinoa's attention was momentarily diverted by the resonating echo of a female voice. A short distance away, two figures were emerging from the training area.

"Squall, it's not like anyone can get by on their own" One of the two forms reverberated. But Rinoa's attention was more fixed on the taller silhouette, whom she recognized as the shy fellow she forced into dancing with her close to an hour ago.

"So that's his name"

"Whose name?" a mildly puzzled Seifer turned to Rinoa.

"That guy" she retorted while pointing with her lips. "I was dancing with him earlier."

"So you've met Squall."

"Yeah, but I didn't know his name until now. He a friend of yours?"

"Oh yeah! Definitely." The problematic Balamb student retorted with a resounding sarcastic tone, which Rinoa failed to detect in light of the approaching figure slowly making its way towards them.

"Oh hey! There he is!"

Seifer turned, his face turning dark upon catching sight of headmaster Cid.

"Young man, I understand that you're supposed to be in

detention."

"Aww give me a break, headmaster." He replied with his usual snide tone. "Why should I spend my time in detention when everyone's out partying? That doesn't seem fair at all, does it?"

Cid stared intently at Seifer, then turned his gaze at the sprightly young girl beside him. Though the rebellious student did commit actions deemed too serious to be tolerated, the headmaster decided that he still didn't deserve to be humiliated in front of a woman.

"So who's your friend?" Cid echoed to change the subject.

"Oh yeah. Headmaster, this is Rinoa. And she would like to talk to you about hiring some of your Seeds'."

"Pleased to meet you." the headmaster enthused as he shook Rinoa's hand. "This is hardly the time to talk about business, but who am I to refuse a lady as radiant as yourself?"

Rinoa giggled. "I thought only Balamb students are flatterers."

"Believe me, my dear. They didn't learn the finer aspects of manhood from Guardian Forces. Please, let's talk in my office."

Rinoa raised a hand to Seifer while she waited with the headmaster for the central elevator to descend. Using her fingers, she gestured a series of signals that he easily understood.

"Tomorrow. Same place. Before midnight."

* * *

> <p>"I'm late! I'm late! I'M LATE AGAIN!"<p>

Rinoa checked her watch for the upteenth time. A quarter past twelve. She anxiously stretched her neck to see if a bus is coming. Nothing. He's gonna kill her for this. She finally decides to run the rest of the way.

Ten minutes later, she felt a little bit of relief upon catching sight of a familiar, brightly glowing neon sign. Galbadia Hotel'. Finally! At least he would only bash her for being twenty five minutes late instead of the usual full hour. She entered through the front doors so frantically that she didn't notice the blonde-haired man wearing a long, gray overcoat making his way towards it from the opposite direction.

And then there were stars.

"You stupid" Seifer was about to lash out at the raven-haired lass when he abruptly halted himself in mid-sentence. In his mind, he was stunned. He had never seen a woman as refreshingly alluring as the one sprawled in front of him.

"Owww what color was that bus?" Rinoa groaned as she was gently pulled up by Seifer.

"You okay?"

"Yeah, never mind the ten stitches I'm going to need" she joked in spite of her throbbing head. Rinoa subsequently snapped to attention when she remembered her appointment.

"Oh my gosh! Excuse me, but I have to meet somebody in the club!"

Seifer fixed his admiring gaze at Rinoa as she scampered off. Then he stood there, unmoving and unmindful of the other hotel guests annoyed by his bothersome presence in the middle of the doorway. A few minutes later, he smiled upon seeing a glum Rinoa emerging from the stairway leading to the hotel bar.

"Dammit, didn't make it on time."

"You're one who could sure use a shot." He confidently voiced out. Rinoa tried to force a smile through her lips.

"Yeah right. As if the bartender is gonna serve us anything with alcohol in it."

"Hey, they only keep the booze away from wimps." He retorted arrogantly. "Come on."

"Uhh, sorry, but I don't go out with people I don't know." Rinoa echoed half-teasingly. "What's your name?"

"Call me Seifer. And you are?"

"Rinoa."

"Lovely Rinoa won't you brighten my gloomy world with your star-like radiance?"

She smiled, and promptly placed her hands around his bent elbows. As they slowly descended the carpeted stairs, Rinoa can't seem to keep herself from gawking at her impromptu escort. There was something about him that she finds so overwhelming so overpowering. In her eyes, Seifer was flashing an infallible hue of brazen confidence; a fiendishly consuming characteristic she has never seen in anyone else before. A deep pit of burning passion hidden underneath the icy cool exterior being displayed by his smug facade and confident aura. A master of his world, slowly asserting his powerful mastery over her fascinated soul. Unwittingly, Rinoa's lips uttered the warm whisper of her heart.

"Seifer"

* * *

> <p>"Seifer"<p>

She sighed. A silent moan from deep in her chest, unloading the weight that she had to endure for attacking him with a devastating Thundaga assault prior to the sudden appearance of the eight-armed enigma. Rinoa can still feel the icy horror of having to witness the cold steel of Gilgamesh's blade pummeling the hapless form of her once-beloved.

"I'm so sorry" she echoed in her mind. Though her understanding with Squall has already been written in stone, she still can't help but feel remorse for having to face Seifer as her enemy. After all, he got there first. He was the first one to open her heart to love. It's just so sad that grim circumstances reared its ugly face and placed them on opposing sides of the fence. Rinoa felt her head spin, the situation proving to be too mind-boggling for her. She turned, and without acknowledging her current beau, walked away.

"I guess it's better this way." Rinoa thought. She was about to step down the hallway littered with the burnt scraps of what was once a fearsome battle robot when her legs abruptly buckled. Much as she tries to deny it, she still cares for him. It may no longer be as strong and imposing as it was before, especially now with Squall's presence in her life.

But a first love will always be a first love. And Rinoa had to learn it the hard way.

She then felt strong arms wrap around her neck.

* * *

> <p>"Eeeeeek!!!"<p>

"You really don't think I'd let you walk away just like that!"

"Look who's talking!" Rinoa shot back as she pried Seifer's arms from her neck. "You're the one who had to run off."

"Much as I hate to do it, duty beckons." He returned. "Besides, I have a score to settle with some jerk tomorrow morning before the exam. Training session. HAH!"

"So when are we going to see each other again?" Rinoa softly whispered directly into his ears.

"Right after the exam. You'll be my date in the inauguration, and then I'll introduce you to the headmaster."

"You think he'll approve of it?" she replied with a trace of apprehension. "I mean, its not like the Forest Owls has lots of reputation or money to speak for."

"If he doesn't, let me know. I'll personally see to it that you get the help you need."

"You promise?" Rinoa beamed.

"Hey, your wish is my command!"

* * *

> <p>"The sorceresses as one! That is Ultimecia's wish!"<p>

"Seifer, no!!!" Squall hollered, to which the baneful Seifer returned a scorning repartee."

"Rinoa and Adel. The sorceresses as one! Watch closely,
Squall!"

Rinoa's face is a look of confused anguish. She can't begin to comprehend the series of events unfolding right before her very eyes. And as Seifer -- the man she first fell for, and the first man who ever pledged her his protection -- now prepares to cast her into the proverbial demon pit, her horror multiplied ten-fold with the cognizance that he whom she once loved had indeed been consumed totally by the infernal obsession of crazed ambition and vain glory. He's gone now, and all she's left with to rely on is the resolute Squall.

However, her ordeal was marred by a startling resonance coming from the lips which nearly touched her delicate ears. Rinoa was caught off-guard by Seifer's heart-melting utterance.

"Rinoa forgive me"

And then he pushed.

End
file.